

INTERDEPENDENT SELF IN A MIGRATING FAMILY

Organizers: Jaan Valsiner, Isabelle Albert & Dieter Ferring

When: Monday, May 2, 10.00-12.30 and 13.30-15.00

Where: Campus Belval, 4.140 MSA

Introduction - Interdependencies of the Self and Dramas of Migration

Jaan Valsiner, Aalborg University, DK

Our Seminar will be devoted to discovering the ways in which human migration leads to the activation of psychological resilience mechanisms that operate within the family system. Different family members at different levels of their personal life courses make different contributions to the family resilience. Maintenance of the affective atmosphere within the family may turn out to be the central issue for adaptation and innovation in the family system in a new social environment.

Family Models of In(ter)dependence: Cultural Change and the Question of Universal Needs

Boris Mayer, University of Bern, CH

I will start by discussing some aspects of Kagitcibasi's Theory of Family Change: its current empirical status and, more importantly, its focus on universal human needs and the consequences of this focus. Family Change Theory's focus on the universality of the basic human needs of autonomy and relatedness and its culture-level emphasis on cultural norms and family values as reflecting a culture's capacity for fulfilling its members' respective needs shows that the theory advocates balanced cultural norms of independence and interdependence. As a normative theory it therefore postulates the necessity of a synthetic family model of emotional interdependence as an alternative to extreme models of total independence and total interdependence. Generalizing from this I will sketch a theoretical model where a dynamic and dialectical process of the fit between individual and culture and between culture and universal human needs and related social practices is central. I will discuss this model using a recent cross-cultural project on implicit theories of self/world and primary/secondary control orientations as an example. Implications for migrating families and acculturating individuals are also discussed.

Family Cultures in the Context of Migration

Isabelle Albert & Stephanie Barros Coimbra, University of Luxembourg, LU

Intergenerational family relations are embedded in family cultures which influence how families regulate their relations over the whole life span with regard to key issues, such as autonomy and relatedness, or support exchange and reciprocity, and which may vary inter- and intraculturally. Migrant families undoubtedly face a special situation as values and expectations from the culture of origin and from the host cultural context might differ. Not much is known yet about how migrant families adapt their family cultures to the host cultural context. We will present first results from the IRMA-study comparing Luxembourgish and Portuguese immigrant families living in Luxembourg with respect to family cohesion, enmeshment and normative expectations regarding adult children's support for their ageing parents. Implications for the experience of ambivalence and conflicts as well as well-being of family members from both generations will be discussed.

The Self in Movement

Meike Watzlawik, Sigmund Freud PrivatUniversität, DE

It has long been studied how migration influences identity development processes. Stage models have been suggested and different strategies for acculturation (e.g., integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation) have been discussed. On an individual level, identity development is, nevertheless, a more complex endeavour: Identity does not only develop, but is constructed - as an ongoing and continuous process. To capture these processes, one can look at different voices within the self representing, for example, cultural specific values and expectations of the current environment. Since these voices may contradict each other, negotiations are necessary. Ways to solve these contradictions in a positive way are discussed with a special focus on the experienced agency in different setting upon arrival in a new country. In addition, it will be shown how sudden events (e.g., 9/11, "Nous sommes Charlie") may challenge identity processes.

On Family and Identity – Closing Words

Dieter Ferring, University of Luxembourg, LU

This seminar is organized as a collaboration of the Universities of Aalborg and Luxembourg within the framework of the project IRMA – Intergenerational Relations in the Light of Migration and Ageing at the Research Unit INSIDE. For further information please contact Isabelle.Albert@uni.lu

